THE *Nature* and *Property* OF A *Christian* APOLOGY FOR RELIGION,

Explain'd and Recommended in a

SERMON

PREACH'D AT *Northampton*, April 26, 1721.

AT THE

VISITATION

Of the REVEREND *Mr.* RICHARD CUMBERLAND, Arch-Deacon of NORTHAMPTON.

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1 PET. Chap. iii. latter part of *Ver.* 15.

Be ready always to give an ANSWER *to every Man that asks You a reason of the Hope that is in You, with* MEEKNESS *and* FEAR.

Or, according to the more Emphatical Reading of the *Alexandrian* and several other Copies, with the *Adversative Particle* inserted before the Direction, ἀλλὰ μετὰ πραύτητος καὶ φόβου, *but* with MEEKNESS and FEAR.

THE Coherence and Meaning of the Words is plainly this: If the Practice of the Vertues before recommended, from the Eighth to the Fourteenth Verse of this Chapter, such as Unanimity in Religious Principles, adorn'd with a meek, quiet, peaceable, courteous and charitable Conversation, should not,

through the Perverſeneſs of Men, preſerve the Chriſtian Converts from the Rage and Malice of their Perſecutors, as might reaſonably be expected, but, notwithſtanding ſuch a cautious and inoffenſive Behaviour, they ſhould ſometimes be expos'd to Suffering for the ſake of the Goſpel, they ought to look upon it as their Happineſs, and not be diſcourag'd at the worſt that could befall them; but Sanctify the Lord God in their Hearts, by fearing his Diſpleaſure, more than any thing that Man cou'd do to them; and relying upon his gracious Promiſes of affording them Support or Deliverance, and of pouring Vengeance on their Oppreſſors. And therefore they need not at any time fear or ſcruple to confeſs the Chriſtian Faith, but be ever ready to give an Account of it, by way of DEFENCE or APOLOGY, to the Magiſtrates, or Others, that Queſtion'd them upon that Head. Only They muſt be careful to do this in a diſcreet and proper *Manner: With* MEEKNESS and FEAR; in a Conſcientious Regard of *God* and *Man*.

Excellent and Seaſonable this Advice, becoming the *Threefold* Character of an *Apoſtle*, *Confeſſor*, and *Martyr*.

But it will be Invidious and Ungrateful, at this time, to conſider it in the ſame View, wherein *St. Peter* firſt deliver'd it to thoſe who were in a *State of Perſecution*.

I ſhall therefore accommodate it to the Deſign of our Preſent Meeting, by abſtracting it from *that particular Occaſion*.

And

And the Words, taken independently from he *Context*, offer *Two Heads* very proper to be onsider'd :

First, A *Duty* or *Precept*.

Secondly, A *Caution*, or *Direction*, about it.

The *Duty* requir'd is, *An Habitual Preparation, r Readiness, to Answer for, to explain and vinicate, the Religion we profess.*

The *Caution*, or *Direction*, shows the *Manner ow* it is to be Perform'd : With a Temper beoming the Spirit of Christianity : With MEEKESS, Modesty, and Calmness towards *Man* ; ith Humility, Reverence, and FEAR, as beore *God*.

The Distinct Consideration of Each of These articulars will produce the Two Branches of e Ensuing Discourse.

And a Brief Display of the *Reasonableness, ecessity* and *Obligation* of the Duty, under the oresaid *Regulations*, shall make the *Application*.

To Begin with the First Particular, contain'd the Former Part of the Text ; *Be ready alys* πρὸς Ἀπολογίαν, to ANSWER, or APOLOISE, for, and Vindicate, your *Hope*, that is, our Religion and Faith : I am to Consider the *ature* and *Extent* of This *Duty* ; *wherein* it *Conss*, and *whom* it *Concerns*.

This will be found, upon a very little Reection, to be a large and comprehensive *Duty*, esupposing the Endowment of several Divine races, and including the joint Exercise of any Vertues.

Know-

Knowledge, Faith, Zeal and Exemplary Pi ety are its conſtituent Principles, ſuch as muſ neceſſarily concur in Him that is unexception ably *Ready* and *Provided* to *Anſwer* for, to Ex plain and Vindicate his Religion.

But, not to launch into a Diſcourſe upo Each or Any of theſe Vertues, and their re ſpective Conduciveneſs to the Perfection o this *Duty*; I ſhall only point at thoſe Particu lars the *Duty* directly Implies, ſuch as plainl ſet forth its *Nature*, and fully take in its u moſt *Compaſs*.

Now a Conſtant *Readineſs* to Plead for an Defend the Goſpel includes the following Pa ticulars.

Firſt, *A Perfect Knowledge and Underſtandi of the Grounds and Principles of Chriſtianity.*

By which I mean not only thoſe Gener Eſſential and Important Truths, that compri the whole Subſtance of the Chriſtian Doctrin that are the Source and Fountain of all the P culiar Rules and Precepts of the ſaid Inſtitu on, and that influence the whole Tenour Life and Practice; ſuch as are the Doctrine the *Second Covenant* made by God in Je Chriſt the Mediator, and the Means of Gra therein appointed: But alſo under this Expr ſion I comprehend the Grounds and Founda on of the Truth and Certainty of this Relig thoſe External Proofs, upon which it was firſt Eſtabliſh'd, whereby it work'd upon Belief of the moſt ſcrupulous Enquirers, ſa fy'd their Reaſon, and challeng'd their Fai

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made an infinite Number of Adversaries become its stedfast Votaries, and has since triumph'd over all Opposition.

By Attending to *These* Grounds, a Christian knows *Why*, and by Reflecting on the *Other*, *What* it is, He Believes. By *These* He is assur'd that it is a *Faithful Saying*, and by *Those* that it is *Worthy of all Acceptation*; And by Both it is distinguish'd from an *Irrational* and *Blind Faith*. Both therefore are undoubtedly prerequisite to a Defence of the Faith.

How unqualify'd is He to enter the List of Dispute, and engage in the Defence of his Religion, who takes it upon trust, never examines into the Grounds and Motives of its Credibility; never enquires into the Nature of its Doctrine; what Privileges it bestows, or what Obligations it induces; What it proposes to, or requires of, Him. Such a weak *Advocate* must expect to lose his *Honour*, as well as his *Cause*: And indeed deservedly forfeits the *Former*, for venturing when Unfit to defend the *Latter*.

But, *leaving the Principles of the Doctrine of Christ, let us go on to Perfection*, [Heb. 6. 1.] and advance to the Consideration of the next Particular imply'd in a Constant Readiness to defend the Gospel.

Now, besides the Knowledge of the *First Principles of the Oracles of God*, [Heb. 5 12.] Distinct Understanding of their Tendency, and of the Duties resulting from them; a clear and Perfect Apprehension of the Nature, Method,

thod, and Order of the *Christian Oeconomy* is fur ther requir'd in a Defence of this Institution:

The Duty Implying

Secondly, *A Comprehensive View of the whol Scheme and Design of Religion; the Harmony an Order of its Parts, and their Consistence with th whole.*

Christianity is a Mysterious Contrivanc full of Wisdom and Love, and is a Complicat on of Noble and Divine Truths, fitted to di play the Glory of the Divine Attributes. Bu the Revelation of These Truths, and of Th Glory is made to such only as contempla them with Reverence and Attention.

These, and These only, behold the beaut ous Order of God's Oeconomy in Man's Salv tion, and discover the Graciousness and Wi dom of every Step in that Proceedure. For the Negligent and Profane all appear perplex disorder'd, and confus'd; and yet the Disord is in themselves only, not in the Sacred Page where the *Nature*, *End*, *Author*, *Means*, *M thod*, *Instrument* and *Effects* of Man's Redem tion are all clearly, distinctly and uniform express'd and taught. Not indeed in th exact Systematic Order that Human Art quires; but dispers'd here and there, mi with other Matters, and with a Native Si plicity deliver'd, as Occasion serves. Som times *Historically* related; sometimes couc in a *Parable*, or involv'd in a *Type*; some wh mysteriously signify'd in a *Prophecy*, or impl in a Figure; elsewhere express'd in the Pla ness of a *Precept* or a *Doctrine*.

The Ranging all which into their *Natural Order*, and reducing them to the *aforesaid Heads*, opens to the Mind of every Serious Observer a thorough Prospect of the wise Conduct of Providence in the whole course of his Salvation; and presents to View a better and more consistent *System* of Truth and Knowledge, more agreeable to Reason, and suited to the Improvement of his *Intellectuals* and *Morals*, than was ever taught in the *Schools* of *Rome* or *Athens*.

But the *Framing* such a clear and regular *Scheme*, the *Delineating* such an exact *Draught* of Religion, and *Forming* such a true, full proportion'd *Body of Divinity* immediately from the *Scriptures*, from whence only it can be compos'd, is a Work of Labour and Pains, of much Study and Great Judgment; of a Mind that Meditates, and Feeds upon, and Digests the Word of God aright.

And doubtless One Reason, among many others, that may be assign'd for that seeming Neglect of Order, and that Inartificial Manner, in which the Scriptures are written, is to engage the greater Diligence and Attention of the Readers in their Perusal. And the many useful and fresh Discoveries, such studious Searchers constantly make in every repeated Enquiry, are an ample Recompence for, and a new Encouragement to, the continued Return of their Labours.

These assiduous and thoughtful Readers, who are daily *comparing Spiritual Things with*

Spiritual, [1 Cor. 2. 13.] have a lively an compleat Idea of the whole Series and Con texture of Religion always present in thei Minds; and see a much nobler and free Draught of it, more expressive of its Nativ Majesty and Beauty, more worthy of its Di vine Author, and of Man's Acceptation, an laid down in better Order in the plain artle Tables of the Scripture, than in the most exac Methodical Systems of Human Contrivance Which, notwithstanding all their Art, disco ver after all the Contracting narrow Principle of their several Compilers.

But, since All have not a sufficient Reach o Understanding to glance through at once th several *Concordant* Parts of Scripture, as the lie there dispers'd, nor Judgment and Ski enough to draw them together into one Poin of View, exhibiting the *whole Plan and Order ly Scheme of Christianity*, The *Church* has wise ly drawn up, after the *Primitive Pattern*, wit great Judgment and Care, a *Short Summary o Religion*, clearly setting forth the *Subject*, *Na ture* and *Scope* of it, to convey to the Unin form'd Mind true and distinct Ideas of Chri stianity.

And herein (as in all Her other Usages) sh copies after the *Apostles* Example, who seem t have set the Pattern of this Method of Institu tion, by delivering only some plain Rudiment of Doctrine at first to their new Disciples which They afterwards enlarg'd in their *Epi stles* and *Conversation*, as They grew up *to th*

Measur

Measure of the Stature of the Fulness of Christ. [Eph. 4. 13.] What else can St. Paul mean by these Expressions? Τύπος διδαχῆς εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε· *That Form of Doctrine which was deliver'd to you*, [Rom. 6. 17.] and his Ὑποτύπωσις ὑγιαινόντων λόγων. *The Form of Sound Words.* [2 Tim. 1. 13.] Phrases that seem to intimate some certain *Draught of Religion.*

And, since these little *Formularies* consisted of *Interrogatories* and *Answers*, the *Text* is also thought to have some *Allusion* to them, enjoining a *Readiness to Answer* the *Captious Enquirer*, as well as the *Serious Instructor.*

The Doctrines contained in them are plainly intimated in the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*; where *Repentance*, *Faith*, *Baptism*, *Confirmation*, the Articles of a *Resurrection* and a Future *Judgment* [Heb. 6. 1, 2.] are reckon'd among the Στοιχεῖα (or First *Elements*) of Christianity taught to Babes.

But St. *Cyril*'s Eighteen Famous Discourses to the *Catechumens*, and the Author of the *Apostolical Constitutions* [Lib. 7. Cap. 39.] will furnish us with more distinct and explicit Schemes for their Instruction.

So careful were the First Christians to make their Disciples comprehend the whole Scope and Design of their Religion, and so wisely did they provide them with Helps for this Purpose, and consequently to discharge the Duty in the Text, which They, who so well understood its Meaning, saw plainly the Generality wanted even upon this Account.

To

To defend the Gospel, is, to maintain its Purity, to assert its Truth, to baffle its Adversaries, to explain its Doctrines, reconcile its seeming Differences, and solve innumerable Objections. But He, who is provided for all this, must know the whole *Mystery of Godliness*, and be able to *declare all the Counsel of God* [Acts 20. 27.] Must comprehend the full Design of Christianity, and see how every Part conspires to promote it: Must consequently understand all that Religion enjoyns, the Nature and Meaning of every Article, the Reason and Latitude of every Duty: Must see into the Malignity of Mistake and Error, and its respective Influence on the Welfare of Religion: Must know what corrupts its Simplicity, what contradicts its Sanctity, what finally dissolves its Authority. Must be both a Good *Textuary*, and a Good *Casuist*.

In short, He must enlarge his View, and survey at once the whole Compass of Religion. Observe the Symmetry and Order and Dependence of its Parts, see the full Portraiture of it in the same Dimensions it appears in *Scripture*, which, rightly understood, *is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good Works.* [2 Tim. 3. 16.]

But further, to make this Stock of Learning and Knowledge useful to the Purposes intended, and to have it ready to be employ'd in the Defence and Service of the Gospel, 'tis requisite

Thirdly

Thirdly, *Frequently to Reflect upon, and Re-olve often in the Mind the aforesaid Truths, and ake them familiar to the Thoughts.*

To be *Habitually Prepar'd*, according to the leasures before laid down, is to be *Habitually nowing*. But an *Habit of Knowledge*, and uni-ersally Every Other *Habit*, (if *Philosophy* is not holly in the Dark as to their Nature,) con-sts principally, if not solely, in *Memory*. And his entirely depends upon the repeated Exer-ise of Meditation and Recollection.

To have therefore an Habitual and Useful nowledge of Religion, profitable to Our elves and Others, is *to take heed to its Doctrine, o continue in it, to meditate thereon, to be wholly n it*; [1 Tim. 4. 15, 16.] *to give earnest heed o the things we have learnt, lest at any time we let hem slip*; [Heb. 2. 1.] *to keep our Souls diligent-y, lest we forget the Covenant of the Lord our God*; [Deut. 4. 9, 23.] *to hide his Word within our Hearts*, [Psal. 199. v. 11.] *that we may observe ll that is written therein*; [Josh. 1. 8.] *and to make his Testimonies our Delight and our Counsel-lors.* [Psal. 119. 24.]

But, to make the aforesaid *Preparation* be-come Effectual, and excite to an Engagement n the *good Fight of Faith*, 'tis necessary

Fourthly, *To have a constant Perswasion of the Importance, as well as Certainty, of Religion, to-gether with a Resolution to maintain it, both by Ar-gument and Example.*

'Tis This alone that gives Life and Force to Knowledge, inspires Zeal, and excites Cou-

rage;

rage; 'Tis This alone that unſeals the Lip and looſens the Tongue of *the Mighty and El quent in the Scriptures*; and makes him *spe boldly, even as he ought to ſpeak.* [Eph. 6. 20 And, indeed, the moſt Conſummate Know ledge, without this Zealous Perſwaſion, wi profit nothing in the preſent Caſe; ſince it wi produce no APOLOGY for Religion: *This* be ing *the* only *Victory that overcomes the Worl* and his Fears of it, *even* his *Faith.* [1 John 5. 4

'Tis not the Certainty and Importance o Things, but the Senſe of a Man's Mind con cerning them, that influences his Behaviou Not to Be, and Not to be perſwaded of Bein is all One, in a Moral Account. 'Tis the Sp rit of a Man that muſt ſuſtain Him in all En counters, and that depends upon his Appre henſion.

He muſt be affected with a deep an lively ſenſe of the Moment of the *Cauſe* He to *Plead*, and of the Obligation He is under t appear in its Defence; otherwiſe his under ſtanding the true State of it, and his grea Abilities to ſpeak Learnedly and Eloquently i its behalf; to diſplay its Worth and Excellency and recommend it to the Eſteem and Appro bation of Others, will not prevail with himſel to become its *Advocate* and *Patron*, when Dan gers ſurround Him, and *Death* comes forth t meet the Champion, and the *Confeſſor* is ſur to be made a *Martyr*.

To be *Ready* therefore *to give an Account o* and *Anſwer for the Faith, is to have a Readine*

Mind to do so; An Abiding Conviction of the *ecessity laid upon Us*, and of the *Woe* entail'd, in any Exigence, *We do not* thus *Preach*, thus anfully Assert, *the Gospel*: But that, *if we do willingly, we have a Reward: If against our Will, a Dispensation of the Gospel is committed unto* s. [1 Cor. 9. 16, 17.]

Whether Religion be a Truth of such Importance and Certainty: Whether likewise his *Readiness to plead* for it admits of no Prudential Reservedness and Concealment of our pinions: Whether it obliges to a Publick and pen Profession of it in all Cases; and allows no Declining Dangers by Caution and Silence, is besides my present Purpose to determine.

'Tis enough to shew that the Practice of the uty in the *Text* necessarily implies such a general Perswasion of its Importance. To implant which, I shall only urge the remembrance of our Saviour's Threatning to *Deny hose before his Heavenly Father, who*, through hame or Fear, *Deny Him before Men*; [Matth. o. 32. Luke 12, 8, 9.] and of the Example of he Courage, and Constancy, and Patience of he Primitive Martyrs, *who were Tortur'd, 'not cepting Deliverance* upon the base Terms of *enouncing the Faith*, and *Denying their God.* To which let me add, in the Close hereof, the Words of the Wise King *Solomon*, *The Fear of Man brings a Snare*; [Prov. 29. 25.] and of the Apostle, *With the Heart Man believes unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation.* [Rom. 10. 10.] All

All that remains for Me to ſpeak further upo *This Head*, is to ſhew, *Whom this Duty* (th explain'd) *belongs to*, and *Who* are *concern'd* the *Execution* of it.

And the Reaſon and Nature of it ſhew it be of *Univerſal Concernment*: Not, indeed, that full extent of Perfection, wherein it ha been now Repreſented; ſince *All* are not her by requir'd (as *Eſtius* well obſerves) to b come Learned and Compleat *Divines*, throug ly vers'd in all the Controverſial Points of R ligion: Neither are *All* oblig'd to commen Teachers, or Able to be ſo. *Qua Scientia* (ſa St. Auſtin) *non pollent Fideles plurimi, quamv polleant ipſa Fide plurimum. Aliud eſt enim ſci tantummodo quid Homo credere debeat propt adipiſcendam vitam beatam: Aliud autem ſci quemadmodum hoc ipſum et piis opituletur, et co tra impios defendatur.* [Lib. 14. de Trin Cap. I.]

All however, who *name the Name of Chri* and profeſs His Doctrine, are bound, accor ing to their ſeveral Capacities, to defend t Cauſe of their Religion.

And there are certain plain and general Re ſons or Arguments of its Truth and Excelle cy obvious to the Meaneſt Underſtandin ---------- Such as the Early Predictions of in the Prophets: The Confirmation and Aſſ rance, at its Promulgation, by innumerab Miracles of Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles: T Sudden and Amazing Propagation of throughout the whole World; and its conti

u

ued Prevalence ever ſince, in ſpite of all Op-
poſition. ------ Add to this, The Tranſcend-
ent Holineſs and Excellence of its Doctrines
and Precepts, enjoyning the ſtricteſt Juſtice,
the greateſt Purity, and the moſt Extenſive
Charity. And as for the *Myſteriouſneſs* of ſome
of its *Articles*, The *Anſwer* is at hand: 'Tis no
Wonder there ſhould be ſome *Incomprehenſible*
Particulars in Religion, when there are ſo ma-
ny *Inexplicable Myſteries* in Nature.

Theſe, and ſuch like, plain and ſolid Rea-
ons every Chriſtian is able to learn, and have
in *readineſs* to *Plead in Defence* of his Profeſſion.
And thus far, at leaſt, All without Exception
are Oblig'd, by Virtue of This Apoſtolical
Precept.

But, in a much higher degree, doth it con-
cern Us who are *Separated for the Miniſtry, for
the Perfecting of the Saints, for the Edifying of the
Body* of *Chriſt*. [Epheſ. 4. 12.] Whoſe Office it
is to be Guides and Inſtructors in the Faith:
Who, by the manifeſtation of the Truth, are to
*commmend our Selves to every Man's Conſci-
ence in the Sight of God*; [2 Cor. 4. 2.] Who
are to *Preach the Word*, to *be Inſtant in Seaſon,
and out of Seaſon*; [2 Tim. 4. 2.] to *Convert
and Strengthen* our *Brethren*: [Luke 22. 32.]
Whoſe *Lips* are to *keep Knowledge, and* the Peo-
ple to *ſeek the Law at* our *Mouths*: [Malac. 2. 7.]
Who muſt be *able, by ſound Doctrine, both to
exhort and convince Gainſayers*; [Tit. 1. 9.] and
to bring them over to the Faith: Who muſt
be *apt*, and conſequently ready, *to Teach*;

in MEEKNESS *instructing those that oppos themselves.* [2 Tim. 2. 24, 25.]

Which brings me to

The Second Branch of My Discourse, concerning the *Regular Performance* of the Duty prescrib'd in these Words,

With MEEKNESS and FEAR.

The *Former* respected the *Matter* and *Substanc* of it; *This* the *Manner* and *Circumstance* of Doing it. And 'tis not enough to Attend to th *Former*, without Observing the *Latter*. Th *Manner of Performance* oftentimes affecting th very *Essence* of Duty. And not only the Suc cess, but the Vertue, the Piety, the whol Goodness of an Action is suspended on the *Regular Way* of producing it. So that 'tis of th highest Moment to be Nice and Scrupulous i Matters of *Morality* and *Religion*.

To APOLOGISE for *Religion* in a fierce violent and insolent Manner: To *Plead* for i with *Anger* and *Bitterness* of Spirit; with *Contempt* and *Reproach* of its Opposers: Or wit *Vain-Glory* and *Pride* of being Serviceable t God: Or to Do it with *Faint-Heartedness* an *Fear* of Man; with *Dissimulation*, with *Distru* and *Diffidence*, is to confound *Vertue* and *Vi* together, to turn a Duty into Sin, and mak our Good justly deserve to be evil spoken of.

Religion must be Defended in a way worth it self, and cannot be Recommended by an other Temper, than what it inspires. Th Spirit of Christianity is a Spirit of Gentlenes and MEEKNESS is its most distinguishin

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Ornament: And He, who engages in the *Vindication* of it with Heat and Fury, runs counter to Himself, defeats all his Arguments, and hopes in vain to shew the Power and Excellence of that *Religion*, which has so little Influence on Himself.

So that the Honour and Interest of *Religion* are concern'd in the *Qualifications* of those that undertake its *Defence*. And God, who is never wanting to provide for the Credit and Support of his own Institution, has wisely enjoin'd, in the *Text*, such a Conduct, as cannot fail to recommend a Good Cause to the Approbation of All that Attend to it, when Stated and Explain'd after so convincing a *Manner*, and is Pleaded with equal *Modesty* and *Resolution*. For the FEAR of *God* inspires true *Bravery* and *Courage*.

And 'tis such a Proper Temper and Disposition of Mind the *Qualifications* here prescrib'd were design'd to produce.

A Temper that pays due Regard to Two Different Objects, which every *Apologist* ought especially to consider. A Temper that arises from Worthy and Awful Apprehensions of *God*, and a Due Sense of *Humane Nature*. That Reverences the *Divine Perfections*; and condescends to the Infirmities of *Man*. That forms Every Address in the Spirit of MEEKNESS, and in the FEAR of *God*. *Qualities* that certainly engage the Favour of *Both*; and are therefore only requir'd to *Attend*, because they *Adorn* Every *Christian* APOLOGY.

The

The First *Quality* is MEEKNESS.

A *Vertue* so well known as to need no *Description*, and so endearing as to want no *Recommendation*. The Person invested with it having discarded the Furiousness of Pride, the Rancour of Malice, the Peevishness of Anger, the Perverseness of Conceit, and every thing else that is disagreeable and offensive. So that, when Such a One turns an Advocate, His *Manner* of Pleading engages a patient and a *favourable Hearing*.

And *Christianity* wants no more than a *fair Hearing*. 'Tis so Reasonable an Institution, so worthy of its Divine Author, so suited to Man's Condition, and withal supported by such Powerful Arguments, and Clear Evidence, that whoever Attends to them cannot fail but give a ready Assent. For, indeed, the Gospel *commends it self to Every Man's Conscience*; *and if*, after a bare Relation, *it* continues *hid*, *'tis hid only to those that are lost, whose Minds the God of this World has blinded, lest the Light of the Glorious Gospel of Christ should shine unto them.* [2 Cor. 4. 3, 4.] To all Unprejudic'd Persons, *'tis the Wisdom and the Power of God unto Salvation.* [Rom. 1. 16. 1 Cor. 1. 18. 24.]

And the *Meek* Person has the fewest Prejudices to encounter, and is the best Able to remove them. For all that arise from the Injudiciousness of the Pleader, his Discretion prevents: And such as are owing to Ignorance or Misapprehension of the Case, his Prudent and Clear Stating of it immediately takes away. This the Holy Spirit, the Searcher of Hearts, foresaw,

reſaw, and therefore committed the *Defence* f the *Goſpel* more eſpecially to the *Meek* nd *Prudent*.

For, indeed, ſuch a One has a *Double Ad-antage* in the Propoſal of his Cauſe.

Firſt, *He is in the likelieſt and fitteſt Temper to pprehend it beſt Himſelf.*

Secondly, *To ſet it in a true Light, and pro-re it the Approbation of Others.*

Theſe *Propoſitions* are Both of ſuch ſhining ightneſs and Evidence, that 'tis needleſs to iſt upon their Illuſtration before This *Au-ence*.

I ſhall therefore content My Self to Obſerve pon The Firſt:

That MEEKNESS both *Phyſically* and *Mo-lly* contributes to the Pleader's own better nformation; as it engages Him to be Serious, ecollected, and Compos'd; and the Divine pirit to illuminate Him with a brighter Beam Wiſdom from above. So that, upon his wn Account, 'tis highly expedient He ſhould Cloath'd with MEEKNESS, at that time ore eſpecially, when He is to *Advocate* the auſe of God and Religion.

And upon

The Second

wou'd briefly Remark, that

The *Meek* and Calm Reaſoner is not only eſt Qualify'd to Underſtand his Cauſe; but o beſt ſecur'd againſt all Miſconduct in the anagement of it: His Conſtitution and emper being ſtrong Barriers againſt the In-

diſcretions

discretions of Blind Zeal, and the Inadverte cies of Haste and Eagerness.

For, indeed, *Deliberation* and *Thoughtfuln* are Qualities that enter in the very Notion MEEKNESS: And *Calmness*, *Ingenuity*, a *Modesty* of Address are its *Essential Properti* as well as its *Peculiar Ornament* and *Grace*.

Hence that Mighty Depth of Reason, a Great Force of Perswasion, which ever acco panies the *Meek Orator*'s Discourse: But es cially when *God* and *Religion* are the No Subject.

Then His *Doctrine drops as the Rain*, H *Speech distils as the Dew, as the small Rain u the tender Herb, and as the Showers upon the Gr* [Deut. 32. 2.] And He finds the Success swerable to the sweet Influences of those H venly Vapours: *The Word that goes out of Mouth returns not* to him *void*, *but* (throu the Divine Blessing) *accomplishes that which pleases, and prospers in the Thing whereto* He *it*. [Isa. 55. 11.]

Such is the Blessed Effect of the *Meek* Ma *guiding* His Words *with Discretion*.

But the Other *Quality* that is to be Obser in a *Christian*'s APOLOGY for His Relig is FEAR.

FEAR of *God*, and an awful Sense that His *Cause* He is defending. This keeps H in a due Frame of Mind, all the while He engag'd in the Debate.

Under the Influence of This Apprehens He uses that noble * Παῤῥησία, that *Plain*

* Παῤῥησία, ἐξουσία, ἄδεια. *Hesych.*

d *Freedom of Speech*, which so often distin-
ish'd and recommended the Apostles, and
imitive Christians, before Courts and Coun-
s, and is so Proper to the Gospel, so becom-
g an *Ambassador* of *Christ*. And if it should
fall out, that the *Christian Apologist* should
oreover sustain the like *Character*, by his spe-
l Designation to the Ministry, He will then
sure to speak, in like manner, with that
uthority, *Freedom*, and *Courage*, which his
gh *Character* and *Function* Demand, and his
ur'd *Faith* and *Hope* inspire. Then (as the
lessed Paul hath taught him, by his Prayer
d Example) [Ephes. 6. 20.] * παῤῥησιάζεται
δεῖ αὐτὸν λαλῆσαι. He speaks with that
wer, that *Openness*, and *Intrepidity*, He ought.
He remembers and considers *the Gospel must*
preach'd to every Creature throughout the
Vorld: [Mark 16. 15.] *All* being alike conditi-
nally interested in the Benefits thereof: For-
much as Christ gave himself ἀντίλυτρον ὑπὲρ
πάντων a *Ransom* (or an Expiation) *for* (the
rfeited Lives of) *all* Mankind. [1 Tim. 2.
] Which astonishingly Gracious Act of Infi-
te Love must (*He knows*) accordingly be
onfirm'd and *testify'd*, ἐν καιροῖς ἰδίοις, *at fit and*
oper Seasons, *in Faith and Verity*, by Him
at (as *St. Paul* emphatically speaks) εἰς αὐτὸ
τέθην Κῆρυξ καὶ Ἀπόστολος καὶ Διδάσκαλος hath
een thereunto Constituted (or Ordain'd) a
reacher, and an *Apostle*, and a *Teacher*. [1 Tim.
. 6. 7. 2 Tim. 1. 11.] The

* Παῤῥησιάζομαι, ἐλευθεροστομῶ. *Phavorin.*

The Fear of God constrains such a One speak: He dares not, He cannot conceal i For He feels the *Word*, which he would stif glow within Him, and, *like Fire shut up with* his Breast, consume his *Bones*, so that He uneasy, He is *weary with forbearing*, *He cann stay*. [Jer. 20. 9.]

This gives Him Utterance, He keeps n thing back, and *shuns not to declare the wh Counsel of God*. [Acts 20. 27.] He dissembl He palliates nothing; but delivers the who Truth as He receiv'd it. What God h thought fit to Reveal, He thinks his Duty Publish; and with Resolution and Intrepidi sets about it.

He does not, like some *Hereticks* of Old, a some Modern *Missionaries* of a certain Churc conceal any Doctrine, to avoid giving Offen He has, indeed, a due Regard to Men's P sons, but pays none to their Lusts, none their Vices, or their Errors. He does not perswade Men, neither does He thus seek please them; He considers that, *if He plea Men, He should not be the Servant of Christ*. [G 1. 10.] And therefore *lets not the Reverence Any Man cause him to Sin*. [Ecclus. 4. 22.]

The *Fear* of God, and of his Displeasure i witholding the Knowledge of any useful Tru from his Brethren, pushes Him on to declare a set before them *the Certainty of those Things wher He hath been instructed*. [Luke 1. 4.] This App hension overcomes all his other Fears: He no boldly ventures to Profess his Faith, to Prop

ga

gate it, to make Proselytes to it, and spread the Knowledge of it in every place. He despises Dangers, is not mov'd with Threats, persists in his Belief, testifies it before Tribunals and Judges, confesses it at the Stake, and fears nothing more than renouncing the Gospel, than betraying of Christ, or *denying the Lord who bought him*, [2 Pet. 2. 1.]

Thus a pious FEAR, as well as MEEKNESS, in the Profession of Religion, contributes naturally to theSuccessful propagating it. For 'tis natural for Men to assent to that Truth, and embrace that Opinion, which they see maintain'd with such Firmness and Resolution. Men are dispos'd to enquire into the Grounds of Credibility That Doctrine pretends to, which they see has already got such strong Hold in the Minds of others, has so far possess'd their Hearts with the Love of it, as to prevail with them to forego all the Comforts and Pleasures of this Life, rather than dissemble or disown it.

But the *Apostle* has join'd MEEKNESS and FEAR together, and they are not to be separated.

The *Christian* must plead with MEEKNESS, because 'tis *the Gospel of Peace* and Love, of the Meek and Holy Jesus, the Lamb of God, which he espouses.

He must do it with FEAR, because 'tis the Revelation of the Supreme Potentate of Heaven and Earth, the *King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.* [Rev. 17, 14. 19, 16.] *Who shou'd not fear him?* [Jer. 10. 7.] [Rev. 15. 4.]

MEEKNESS must be ſhew'd to Man, to work upon his Affections. FEAR expreſſed towards God, to exclude Tameneſs and unworthy Condeſcenſions to Man; to inſpire him with becoming Courage, that he may not be *afraid of Terror, nor be troubled: But ſanctify the Lord God in his Heart*; [1 Pet. 3. 14, 15.] and ſo be *ready always* to diſcharge aright the Duty recommended.

Permit me now, in the cloſe of this Head, barely to mention two Reflections naturally reſulting from it.

Firſt, how different is the Method of propagating the Chriſtian Religion, here preſcribed, from that which the *Arabian Impoſtor* enjoin'd his Followers?

And the Second is like unto it.

That *Perſecution* for the Cauſe of God, and under the Pretence of Religion, that Violence and *Roman* Arts of Converſion are diametrically oppoſite to the Spirit and Genius of Chriſtianity.

I haſten now to my promis'd *Application*, by a brief Repreſentation of the *Reaſonableneſs*, *the Neceſſity*, and *Obligation* of the Duty under the aforeſaid *Regulations*.

Theſe are ſo many diſtinct *Enforcements* of *Duty*: Each contributing a ſeveral Tye to bind it faſter.

The *Reaſonableneſs* ſhews 'tis *Fit*, and the *Neceſſity* 'tis *Indiſpenſible*: Which jointly carry in them ſomething ſo very *commanding*, that there muſt be Violence to Nature, as well as Authority, to diſobey it.

The

The Legiſlator, in ſuch Caſe, appeals to the Judgment of thoſe that ought implicitly to obey: Refers them to the Nature and Conſtitution of Things about them, bids them make that the Rule of their Obedience, and ſtrengthens his own Authority, by joining theirs to it.

And, that the *Duty* in the *Text* is ſuch, is plain from the Account above given of it.

But it may not be amiſs juſt to touch upon ſome new and further Conſiderations about it.

And if a *Duty*, which requires that Men ſhou'd cultivate their own, and each others, Underſtanding in the Knowledge of what concerns their *common Salvation*, be *reaſonable:* Which enjoins that *every Man* ſhould *pleaſe his Neighbour for Good to Edification:* [Rom. 15. 2.] *Not ſeeking his own Profit* only, *but the Profit of many that they may be ſav'd:* [1 Cor. 10. 33.] And that *no Man* ſhou'd *ſeek* only *his own*, *but every Man* another's Wealth. [1 Cor. 10. 24.] Which preſcribes the Exerciſe of the nobleſt Charity towards each other's Soul; and the Practice of ſeveral Social Virtues in ſome of the beſt Inſtances, and in the greateſt Perfection. If ſuch a *Duty* be *reaſonable*; if it has an Antecedent Fitneſs to be enjoin'd; the *Duty* here recommended is an eminent Inſtance of it.

But, if the Time wou'd permit, and I was ſpeaking to another Aſſembly, I wou'd, for the brighter Diſplay of the *Reaſonableneſs* of this Injunction, propoſe another orderly Train

of

of *Considerations*, that gradually lead the Mind to further and clearer Discoveries of it. Which I shall now humbly beg leave only to *mention*.

First, I wou'd desire it might be consider'd, how *reasonable 'tis that Understanding Creatures should be oblig'd to improve and exercise their proper Faculties in the Knowledge of the most important Truths.*

Secondly, *That they shou'd communicate such their Discoveries, and thereby satisfy each others natural Inquisitiveness about them, for their mutual Benefit and Advantage.*

Thirdly, *That 'tis highly reasonable, the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, so eminently seen in the Contrivance of the Gospel, shou'd be further illustrated in the Defence of it.*

Fourthly, *That 'tis no less reasonable, Men shou'd be first satisfied of the Truth and Certainty of what is propos'd to their Belief.*

Fifthly and lastly, *That so those, who reject it, shou'd be left without Excuse.*

The *Necessity* and *Obligation* of it also might be distinctly argu'd from a like numerous Variety of proper and convincing Topics. But I must pass over these and several other Heads of Discourse unmentioned, remembring before whom I stand.

Let however the Conviction of these and a thousand other more powerful and weighty Reasons, long since better known to you, My Reverend Brethren, influence *All* of *Us*, who are *set for the Defence of the Gospel*, [Phil. 1. 17.] εἰς Ἀπολογίαν τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου

uevoi, are purposely *set* and *appointed* to plead, logize, and argue *for the Gospel:* Let us ac-dingly vindicate it from the Cavils and ceptions of *unreasonable Men*; with which s present Age abounds. Wherein we have 'd to see, not only its venerable Mysteries pos'd, its fundamental Articles undermin'd, illustrious Miracles exploded, and its pure ctrines corrupted; but the *whole Scheme* of too wretchedly perverted and deformed: d *another Gospel* substituted in its Room, ich yet is not *another* Gospel.

When the *Common Salvation* is thus boldly uck at, every one is called upon to appear its Defence.

This the Primitive Christians and Ancient ologists were very sensible of. Hence they mpos'd so many noble Defences of Christi-ity, to explain its Doctrines, assert its uth, demonstrate its Excellence, and nce its Purity: To wipe off Calumnies, de-t Falsities, confute Heresies, purge it from rruptions, prevent or remove Errors, and swer all Objections.

They could not with Patience hear the me and Word of *God* blasphem'd; or see the red Mysteries of their Holy and Undefiled ligion ridicul'd, without appearing against h daring Iniquity; without vindicating e Honour of their blessed Redeemer, and de-ering his Doctrine from the Imputation of surdity and Folly. They were earnest to intain the Truth, and demonstrate the Ju-

stice

ſtice of the Goſpel Revelation; and ne
fail'd to triumph over all its Adverſaries,
cover them with Confuſion.

And as long as the Enemies of our Relig
continue to oppoſe it, attack its Articles,
rupt its Purity, queſtion its Certainty,
ſubvert its Authority, 'twill become the p
lic Profeſſors of it ſtrenuouſly to engage in
Defence; to imitate thoſe Pious, Zeal
and Orthodox *Advocates* of Chriſtianity,
countermining all their Devices, explain
what they perplex, rectifying what they
vert, and eſtabliſhing what they endeav
to overthrow.

So ſhall *We* beſt teſtify our Zeal, and
Fidelity to God and his Church, and our C
rity to our Brethren; when we thus lab
and ſtudy to inſtruct the Simple, confirm
Wavering, reduce the Wandring, and *put*
Silence the Ignorance of Fooliſh Men; endeavo
ing to *convert* All *from the Errors of their W*
and ſave their Souls from Death.

If we write, and ſpeak, and act after
Manner; *in all things ſhewing our ſelves Patte*
of good Works, in Doctrine ſhewing Uncorrupt
Gravity, Sincerity, and ſound Speech that can
be condemn'd: They that are of the contrary P
muſt be aſhamed, having no Evil to ſay of
[Tit. 2. 7.]

But, whether ſuch will *hear*, or whether t
will *forbear*, this, at leaſt, may be comfor
bly hoped, that our ſeveral Flocks will here
continue grounded and ſettled in the Faith,

easily mov'd away from the Gospel, [Colos. 3.] which they have heard us thus faith-y preach, and *whereof*, for this very Pur-, *we were made Ministers*. [Eph. 3. 7.] By ng which, we shall effectually *save our selves, them that hear us*. [1 Tim. 4. 16.]

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant; to whom scrib'd all Honour and Glory, Might, Ma- and Dominion, now and ever. Amen.

FINIS.